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ABSTRACT

Current critical problems in education, especially in urban education as well as societal problems, create the need for re-thinking, re-direction, and re-definition of how psychologists can most effectively contribute to meet the changing needs. This paper presents a plan that is being initiated in Minneapolis. The plan is based on the premise that highly trained psychologists should make their contributions on the broad front of school or system-wide problem solving and problem prevention, and assessment functions and studies of individual children are also an important part of psychological service. The broad objective of the plan is to experiment with the utilization of differential levels of training and function. The functions of the master's degree level psychologists (Level One) include: (1) individual mental measurement, (2) assist in the use and interpretation of group test data, (3) crisis intervention, and (4) discussions with parents. The Level Two psychologists will supervise Level One psychologists, and work on staff developmental programs as well as provide other psychological services in the community. Graduate students and other resources in the community can also be used in this plan. (Author/KJ)

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A PLAN FOR UTILIZING DIFFERENTIATION OF FUNCTIONS IN DELIVERY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

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There has been frequent recognition of the need for change in the ways psychology contributes to education. The July issue of Psychology in the Schools, for example, has two articles concerning this topic.

Current critical problems in education, especially in urban education, as well as societal problems, create the need for re-thinking, re-direction, and re-definition of how psychologists can most effectively contribute to meeting the changing needs. The school psychologist, by his own definition, is a psychologist working in a school system applying the tools and the knowledge of his professional field to the needs and problems of education. The role of the school psychologist will, in consequence, shift somewhat with developments both in education and in psychology.

There are two assumptions basic to the position of this paper:

1) The school is the most important single force for positive change in our society.

2) The field of psychology contains in its body of knowledge much that is crucial to the solution of educational problems.

Historically, educators recognized individual differences among children in their ability to learn and to adapt to school demands. Psychology developed measurement techniques to speed up the identification of "deviant learners," to quantify some of the differences, and to explain some of the qualitative aspects of their differences. Later, the contributions of dynamic psychology helped teachers to understand and to interpret meanings of child behavior, emotional problems, and family-child disturbances. With knowledge gained from these two areas - intellectual measurement and understanding of behavior - changes in education occurred. Programs were developed, most notably within the field of Special Education, to meet the needs of individual children both in areas of learning and of personal-social adjustment. Recently, psychology has made new contributions in research in group interaction, ways of shaping behavior, special learning disabilities, and differing ways in which children learn.

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Over the years, School Psychology in Minneapolis has adapted in response to changing needs in education and emerging new emphases in psychology. School psychologists have become increasingly involved in activities reaching beyond the individual-based, clinical activities which predominated twenty years ago. Through consultations with parents and teachers and through staff development programs, psychologists have made the pertinent knowledge in psychology available to educational practitioners. The special skills of psychologists have also found their way into other departments of the educational scene - research, special education, and personnel.

The application model to be described is consistent, therefore, with the history of School Psychology in Minneapolis and also consistent with the

current educational situation. Bardon says that the goal of school psychology is "to take what is known and to bring it to bear on the problems of the specialty." He suggests three interrelated areas which are of concern to school psychology:

1) The study of what is currently known in all of psychology which might be made applicable to the further understanding of what happens to children when they are in school.

2) The further development of techniques which are directly related to the modification of the educational, social, and emotional development of children and youth in the school setting.

3) The investigation of special areas of school-child interaction which are not yet understood or adequately explained by existing knowledge.

His suggestions encompass applying what is psychologically known, developing techniques to implement more effectively what is known, and carrying on explorations to learn more about what is not known. These areas broaden the scope of the school psychologist, while still including functions he is now performing. In the future, the school psychologist may be expected to know, and to translate into usable form, knowledge that pertains to problem areas as defined by the school. Since he cannot be expected to command all psychological knowledge, in all areas, part of his role may well be to know when to seek a special consultant, and which one to seek, for attention to a specific problem.

We see a wide range of needs for psychological service in a school system which can only be provided by a staff utilizing differential training and skills. Some of these services are being performed by regular staff under the present system. Others, particularly the indirect, system-wide services, would need to be provided by Special Consultants brought in to help with a specific problem. These Special Consultants might be employed as consultants on a part-time basis, or for limited periods of time for a specific problem. The responsibility of the regular staff psychologists would be to contribute to definition of the problem and to find the appropriate Special Consultant to contribute to its solution.

DESCRIPTION OF PLAN

Minneapolis has a student population of about 75,000. The national trend toward decentralization of schools is reflected in Minneapolis by the development of two "pyramids", each with a fair degree of administrative autonomy. In the North Pyramid, a plan is being developed, and will soon be put into action, to deliver differentiated psychological services. Many details of the plan are yet to be worked out, and many problems as yet unanticipated will surely arise. The broad outlines of the project are all that can be described now.

The North Pyramid includes twelve schools: One senior high school, three junior high schools, and eight elementary schools. All are inner city schools with many disadvantaged children. With increasing recognition of the problems involved, and with the availability of Federal funds, there has been considerable effort to make improvements. Social work service has been increased; teacher

aides have been provided; staff of all kinds, including volunteers, has been added; budget allotments for materials and special services have grown. However, psychological service, while it has been increased, has not changed a great deal. This is partly because of limited staff. Psychologists have provided consultation, in-service and other aids to teachers, but the need for diagnostic service still requires a great deal of staff time.

The rapid increases of knowledge in fields of psychology applied to education, including such areas as learning theory, classroom management, individual and group assessment techniques, development of new programs (for example, Headstart), data-gathering, objective criteria, and evaluation techniques, add greatly to the breadth of the demands made of the School Psychologist, and also demand that more of his time be spent "on the spot" if his contributions are to be made in time to help the problems. Recent graduates in School Psychology also document some shifts in training emphasis, in career motivation, and in negotiable skills, as they identify with these broader areas of contribution, in addition to continuing their concern with study of the individual child.

Our plan is based on the premise that the highly trained psychologists should make their contributions on the broad front of school or system-wide problem solving and problem prevention, but that assessment functions and studies of individual children are also an important part of psychological service.

Three psychologists at the master's degree level have been employed to work as members of the psychological team in the North Pyramid. They are graduates in educational psychology or clinical psychology, and have had academic programs in child development, learning, and individual measurement. A more highly trained and experienced member of the department will assume supervisory responsibility for these three. A fifth member of the team who is nearing a Ph.D. in School Psychology has a joint appointment between the University Training Program and the Minneapolis Public Schools' Psychological Services.

These five psychologists are administratively responsible to, and regular members of, the Child Study Department. Their service will be given entirely to the North Pyramid.

The broad objective of the plan is to experiment with the utilization of differential levels of training and function. The team will meet regularly with other school personnel in student support services - that is, social workers, counselors, etc., - and plan the most appropriate use of their skills and experience for that school.

The master's degree level psychologists, who are called School Psychologist I, are new to Minnesota, and certification standards need modification to allow for this. Every effort will be made to prevent this role from becoming that of a psychometrist or "grinder-out" of tests. Functions which they will perform include:

1) Individual mental measurement.

2) Assist in the use and interpretation of group test data.

3) Observation of individual and group behavior, for use in planning by the whole team.

4) Crisis intervention.

5) Discussions with parents concerning children's school adjustment or progress.

6) Other functions designated in particular cases as an outcome of case management conferences.

The members of the team at the School Psychologist II level will provide supervision for the Psychologist I members, and will utilize their own skills and experience in consultation with teachers, in staff development programs, work with curriculum development, classroom management, and community involvement. Their primary responsibility will be to direct the appropriate psychological knowledge to the solution of problems either out of their own skills and experience or by pulling in some other source in the community. Consultants regularly available to the Child Study Department can be called on by the team. Graduate students can provide service while gaining some very pertinent experience within this framework. Other resources in the community, such as mental health clinics and research projects, can be used. The School Psychologist II who holds the joint University-Public Schools appointment is particularly interested in community involvement and interaction analysis, so we expect some contributions in these areas.

The entire staff is working on evaluation techniques. Always a difficult task, evaluation of the results of this plan becomes even more difficult because the fact that the North Pyramid schools will be receiving many times as much service as they have in the past is likely to result in more positive responses. (Perhaps not!) If, by evaluative criteria that we can devise, it can be demonstrated that this plan for utilizing differentiation of functions does make a contribution beyond that of simply increasing the amount of service, then it will be easier to "sell" the addition of staff for the future.